

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2541

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FOR NE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: LIONS CLUB SPEECH

1. ON JANUARY 9 I SPOKE TO THE BEIRUT LIONS CLUB. TALK WAS TO BE OFF THE RECORD AND WAS AN EXTEMPORANEOUS EXPRESSION OF MY PERSONAL REPEAT PERSONAL VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I HAD MENTIONED EARLIER TO FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA THAT I WOULD BE GIVING SUCH A TALK AND I TOLD HIM I PLANNED TO EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE EVENTS IN THE AREA AND EXPRESS MY OPTIMISM AS TO THE FUTURE. BEIRUT AT THAT TIME WAS REplete WITH PESSIMISTIC PROGNOSTICATIONS OF ROUND FIVE AND I TOLD HIM I PLANNED TO BE AS POSITIVE AS POSSIBLE. HE WELCOMED THIS LINE.

2. I SPOKE FOR ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AND I DID NOT INVITE ANY QUESTIONS. THE GENERAL GIST OF MY PRESENTATION WAS THAT SINCE THE OCTOBER WAR WE HAVE SEEN A MAJOR CHANGE IN THREE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE WORLD. IN THE ARAB WORLD SELF-CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN RESTORED AND BY WHAT THE ARABS CONSIDER TO BE A VICTORY THEY HAVE ONCE AGAIN REGAINED THEIR DIGNITY. IN ISRAEL THE WAR WAS COSTLY AND MANY ISRAELIS REALIZE THAT THE PERIOD OF ISRAELI INVINCIBILITY IS PAST AND ARDENTLY SEEK PEACE. THE CONCEPT OF ISRAELI EXPANSIONISM NO LONGER EXISTS IN IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THEIR SOCIETY AND MOST ARE NOW SEEKING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST. FINALLY, IN THE UNITED STATES, CONSTRUCTIVE AMERICAN

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INTEREST HAS DEVELOPED IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THAT AFTER THE GASOLINE

SHORTAGES OF LATE 1973 AND EARLY 1974 AMERICANS ARE ASKING THEMSELVES THE "SHY" OF THE MIDDLE EAST. SIMILARLY, AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISTS NOTED THAT OUR POLICY NO LONGER COINCIDED WITH THAT OF OUR ALLIES AND OLDEST FRIENDS, AND AMERICAN BUSINESS IS TURNING TO THE MIDDLE EAST FOR MARKETS, INVESTMENTS, PETRODOLLARS, ETC.

3. THE PLO AFTER RABAT IN THE EYES OF THE ARAB WORLD IS SPOKESMAN OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. THIS CLARIFIED ONE OF THE UNKNOWN IN THE COMPLICATED MIDDLE EASTERN FORMULA, FOR PRIOR TO RABAT THERE WAS SOME QUESTION AS TO WHO COULD SPEAK FOR THE PALESTINIANS. ARAFAT'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE UN DREW AMERICAN ATTENTION TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND TO THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. AMERICAN CURIOSITY AS TO THE "SHY" OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN PROBLEMS WAS AGIN WHETTED. I CONCLUDED WITH MY PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT ALL PARTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST ARE STILL STRIVING FOR PEACE AND THAT I WAS CONVINCED THAT WITH THE STEP BY STEP APPROACH THE CURRENT PEACE EFFORTS HERE WOULD ACHIEVE SUCCESS. THE QUESTION OF TIMING, HOWEVER, WAS COMPLICATED AND I DID NOT BELIEVE AN EARLY CONVOCATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THAT EFFORT WITHOUT CAREFUL PREPARATION AND A GREAT DEAL OF HARD WORK BEING ACCOMPLISHED.

4. UNBEKNOWNST TO ME OR THE THE LIONS CLUB OFFICIALS, THERE WAS A REPRESENTATIVE OF AN NAHAR PRESENT. AFTER MY TALK SHE ASKED FOR THE TEXT OF WHAT I HAD SAID AND WHETHER SHE COULD QUOTE ME. I POINTED OUT I HAD NO TEXT AND MY TALK CONSISTED OF AN EXTEMPORANEOUS EXPOSE OF MY PERSONAL VIEWS. I TOLD HER IT WAS OFF THE RECORD AND THAT WAS THE CONDITION UNDER WHICH I HAD AGREED TO SPEAK. NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, AN NAHAR CARRIED A ARTICLE THE NEXT DAY HEADLINED "THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR SAYS AT LIONS CLUD RECEPTION THE FUTURE IS NOT DARK AND ARAFAT HAS ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS".

EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF ARTICLE FOLLOWS.

5. QUOTE THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR GEORGE MCMURTRIE GODLEY SAID "MR. ARAFAT HAS ACHIEVED A CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS AT THE UN REGARDING RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN INTERESTS'. HE ADDED 'HIS VISIT TO NEW YORK HAS REVEALED THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE TO AMERICANS IN AN EFFECTIVE MANNER.' HE CONSIDERED THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION AS TO WHO SHOULD REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AS ONE OF THE KEYS TO PEACE IN THE AREA. HE SAID HE IS 'CONCERNED WITH AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PEACE IN THE AREA. THE FUTURE IS NOT DARK, AS MANY PEOPLE THINK.'

THE AMBASSADOR WAS TALKING YESTERDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PHOENICIAN HOTEL WHERE THE BEIRUT METROPOLITAN LIONS CLUB GAVE A RECEPTION ATTENDED BY ABOUT 320 MEMBERS OF THE CLUB, THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR, PAUL WRIGHT AND AUB PRESIDENT KIRKWOOD. THE PRIME MINISTERS SAEB SALAM AND RASHID KARAMI AND MR. RAYMOND EDDE WERE NOT THERE.

THE CLUB PRESIDENT, MR. NADIM MAKDISI, WELCOMED NEW MEMBERS WHO TOOK THE OATH COLLECTIVELY AND MR. FRED BARKER, THE M.C., ASKED SIX MEMBERS WHO WERE BORN IN JANUARY TO CUT THE CAKE AND HE SANG FOR THEM "HAPPY BIRTHDAY".

AFTER MR. BARKER PRESENTED THE SPEAKER, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, THE AMBASSADOR TALKED ABOUT THE OCTOBER WAR WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT A BASIC CHANGE IN THE THINKING OF THE THREE PARTIES TO THE PROBLEM. HE EXPLAINED THAT "MOST OF THE LEADERS, THE MILITARY MEN AND THE ARAB CITIZENS HAD REALIZED AFTER THE WAR THAT THEY HAD REGAINED NATIONAL DIGNITY AND MILITARY ABILITY." HE ADDED 'FOR THE FIRST TIME THE ARABS COOPERATED EFFECTIVELY IN THE POLITICAL FIELD AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD AS WELL.'

HE REFERRED TO THE OIL EMBARGO SAYING IT WAS 'AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON,' AND SAID 'THE POLITICAL UNITY OF THE ARAB STATES DURING THE WAR AND AFTER WAS A PROFOUND REALITY IN THE WORLD.'

THE AMBASSADOR THEN TALKED ABOUT 'THE CHANGE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE OCTOBER WAR IN ISRAELI THINKING', AND SAID THAT THE 'KINGDOM OF DAVID CONCEPT IS NO LONGER AN ELEMENT IN THEIR THINKING'.

ABOUT 'THE DEVELOPMENT OF THINKING IN MY COUNTRY', THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR SAID THE OCTOBER WAR HAS MADE THE ORDINARY AMERICAN 'INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST.' HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE AMERICAN CITIZEN WAS 'SHOCKED BY THE WAR AND THE OIL EMBARGO. HE WAS OBLIGED TO WAIT IN LINE TO GET GAS. THIS MADE HIM SCRATCH HIS HEAD AND ASK HIMSELF WHETHER THE AMERICANS WERE INVOLVED.'

HE EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT 'ALL PARTIES WANT PEACE, BUT IF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IS RESUMED WITHOUT BEING CAREFULLY PREPARED IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL NOT ACHIEVE THE GOALS IT SEEKS'. END QUOTE.
GODLEY

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